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ABSTRACT

This report provides a graphic overview of recent trends in the lifestyles of Americans which suggest a movement away from "traditional" family living. The charts in this report with their limited commentary, summarize major trends and focus on families with children present. Data are also presented on other types of families, households, and living arrangements so that trends affecting children and families can be interpreted in a more complete context. Some of the specific data describes are: (1) U.S. population by age and sex; (2) age at first marriage; (3) percent single; (4) marriage, divorce, and remarriage; (5) fertility; (6) household and family size; (7) household composition; (8) families by type; (9) presence of children by age of parent; (10) one-parent situations; (11) living arrangements of children; (12) children in stepfamilies; (13) labor force characteristics of mothers with newborn children; (14) employment status of husband and wife; (15) primary child care arrangements; (16) educational attainment of parent; (17) trends in median family income; (18) poverty status of families with children; (19) children in poverty; and (20) child support. Future directions in family life are discussed. (ABL)

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Changes in American Family Life

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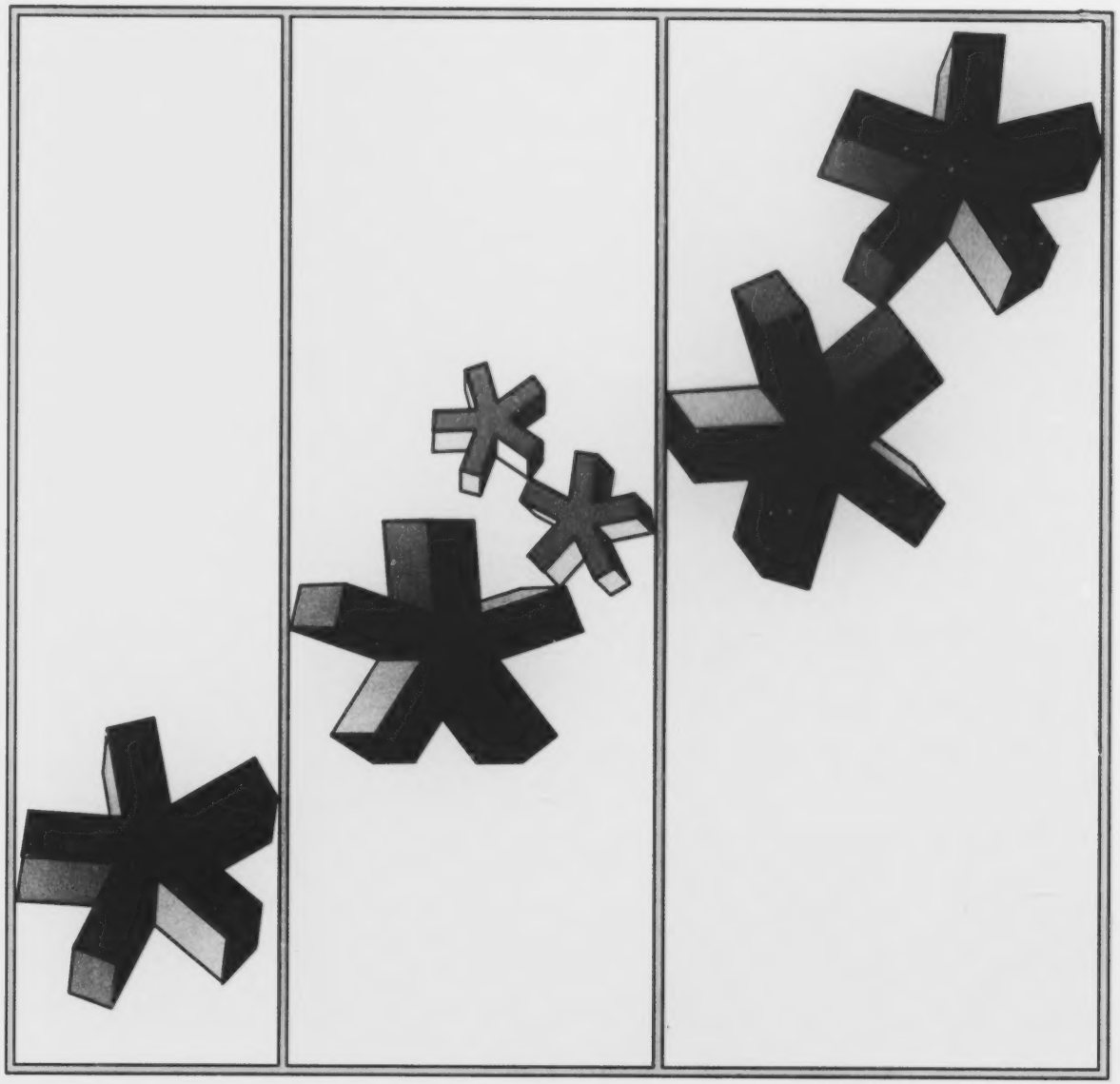

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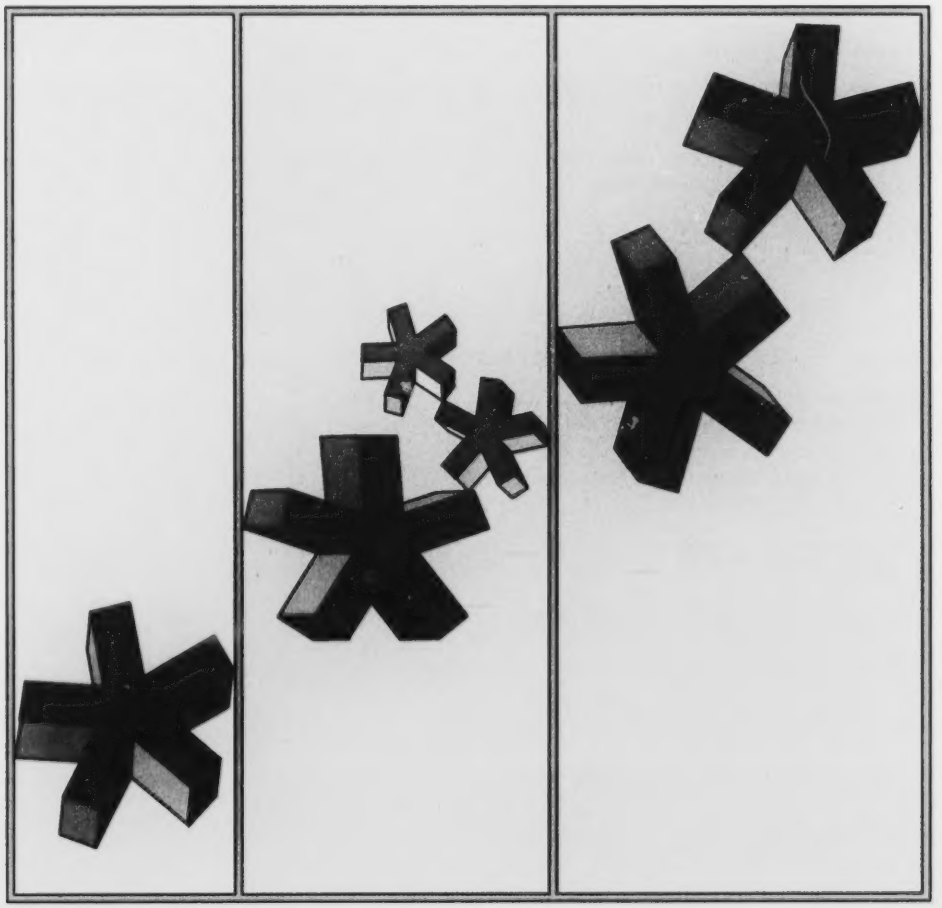

Changes in American Family Life

Current Population Reports
Special Studies
Series P–23, No. 163

by
Arlene F. Saluter

Issued August 1989

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Contents

Introduction 1

U.S. Population by Age and Sex
Figure 1. Distribution of the U.S. Population, by Age and Sex: 1960 to 2000 2

Regional Population Growth
Figure 2. Average Annual Growth in the Population, by Regions: 1960's, 1970's and 1980's 4

Age at First Marriage
Figure 3. Median Age at First Marriage, by Sex: 1890 to 1988 5

Percent Single
Figure 4. Persons Never Married, by Age and Sex: 1960, 1970, 1980, and 1988 6

Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage
Figure 5. Rates of First Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage for Women: 1921 to 1984 7

Fertility
Figure 6. Total Fertility Rate and Numbers of Births: 1920 to 1988 8

Household and Family Size
Figure 7. Average Size of Households and Families: 1960 to 1988 9

Household Composition
Figure 8. Household Composition: 1960 to 1988 10

Families by Type
Figure 9. Type of Family as a Percent of All Family Householders, by Race: 1970 to 1988 11

Presence of Children by Age of Parent
Figure 10. Families With Own Children Under Age 18, by Age of Householder/Parent: 1960 to 1988 12

One–Parent Situations
Figure 11. Change in Composition of Family Groups With Children, by Race and Hispanic Origin: 1970, 1980, and 1988 13

Living Arrangements of Children
Figure 12. Living Arrangements of Children Under 18 Years: 1960, 1970, 1980, and 1988 14

Children Living With One Parent by Marital Status of Parent
Figure 13. Children Living With One Parent, by Marital Status of Parent: 1960 and 1987 15

Children in Stepfamilies
Figure 14. Children, by Presence of Parents and Type of Family: 1985 16

Labor Force Characteristics of Mothers With Newborn Children
Figure 15. Women 18 to 44 Years Old in the Labor Force Who Had a Child in the Preceding 12 Months: 1976 to 1988 17

Employment Status of Husband and Wife
Figure 16. Distribution of Married Couples, by Employment Status and Fertility: 1976 and 1987 18

Primary Child Care Arrangements
Figure 17. Child Care Arrangements for Children of Working Mothers: Winter 1984–85 19

Educational Attainment of Parent
Figure 18. Educational Attainment of Parent: 1960, 1970, 1980, and 1988 20

Trends in Median Family Income
Figure 19. Median Family Income: 1947 to 1987 21

Median Family Income by Type of Family
Figure 20. Median Family Income, by Type of Family: 1947 to 1987 22

Poverty Status of Families With Children
Figure 21. Families With Related Children Under 18 Years That Are Below the Poverty Level, by Race and Hispanic Origin: 1960 to 1987 23

Poverty Status of Families With Children by Type of Family
Figure 22. Poverty Status of Families With Related Children Under 18 Years, by Type of Family, Race, and Hispanic Origin: 1987 24

Children in Poverty
Figure 23. Poverty Status of Related Children Under 18 Years in Families, by Type of Family, Race, and Hispanic Origin: 1987 25

Child Support
Figure 24. Women Due to Receive Child Support Payments in 1985, by Type of Arrangement and Proportion of Payment Received 26

Future Directions 27

Sources for Charts 28

Source and Accuracy of the Data 29

Introduction

During the past two decades, the changes that have taken place in the patterns of family life have attracted enormous attention. By investigating these changes, we realize that lifestyles are dynamic rather than static; that they shift as the participants pass through life, and that political, economic, social, cultural, technological, and demographic factors all interrelate to influence the way we live.

This report provides a graphic overview of recent trends in the lifestyles of Americans.[1] Overall, these trends indicate a movement away from "traditional" family living. These include the high rates of marital disruption, the delay in marriage among young adults, and the increasing tendency for people to live in households either alone or with other people not conventionally related to them.

To some analysts, these changing lifestyles are the momentary result of people adjusting their lives to their new roles in modern society. But whatever the reasons for these changes, recent trends have, at least, made us aware of the wide variety of living arrangements that can and do exist, and of their impact on established social and economic institutions. For example, the increase in divorce has resulted in greater numbers of children and parents learning to cope with single-parent living. The increased labor force participation of women has been linked not only with lower fertility but also with a greater demand for child care by working mothers with young children. These examples illustrate that each part of the population has developed its own needs that must be met by either the private or the public sector or by both.

The following charts, with their limited commentary, summarize major trends and focus expressly on families with children present. Data are also presented on other types of families, households, and living arrangements so that trends affecting our children and families can be interpreted in a more complete context.

Detailed sources for all charts can be found on page 28.

[1] An earlier version of this chartbook was prepared for the Department of Health and Human Services for use in the conference, "National Summit for Families in the Nineties," held in Baltimore, Maryland, November 1988.

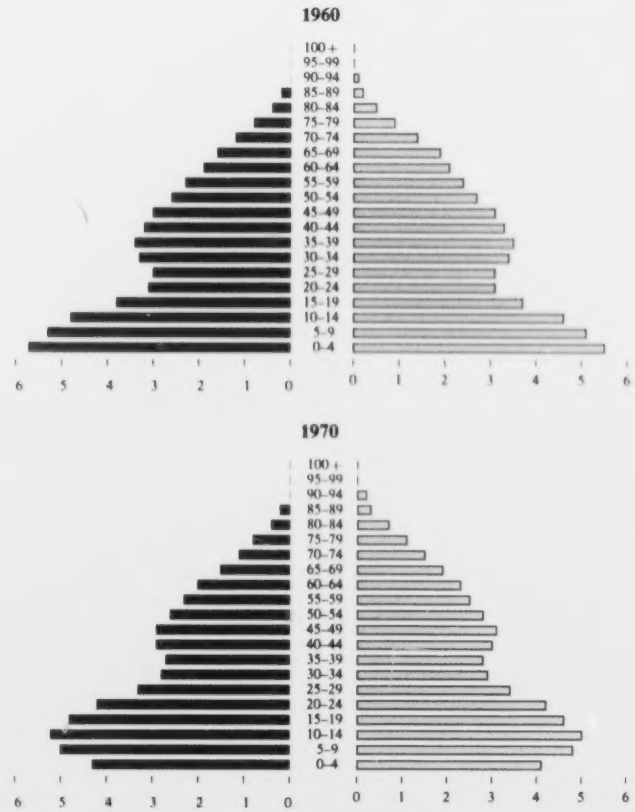
U.S. Population by Age and Sex

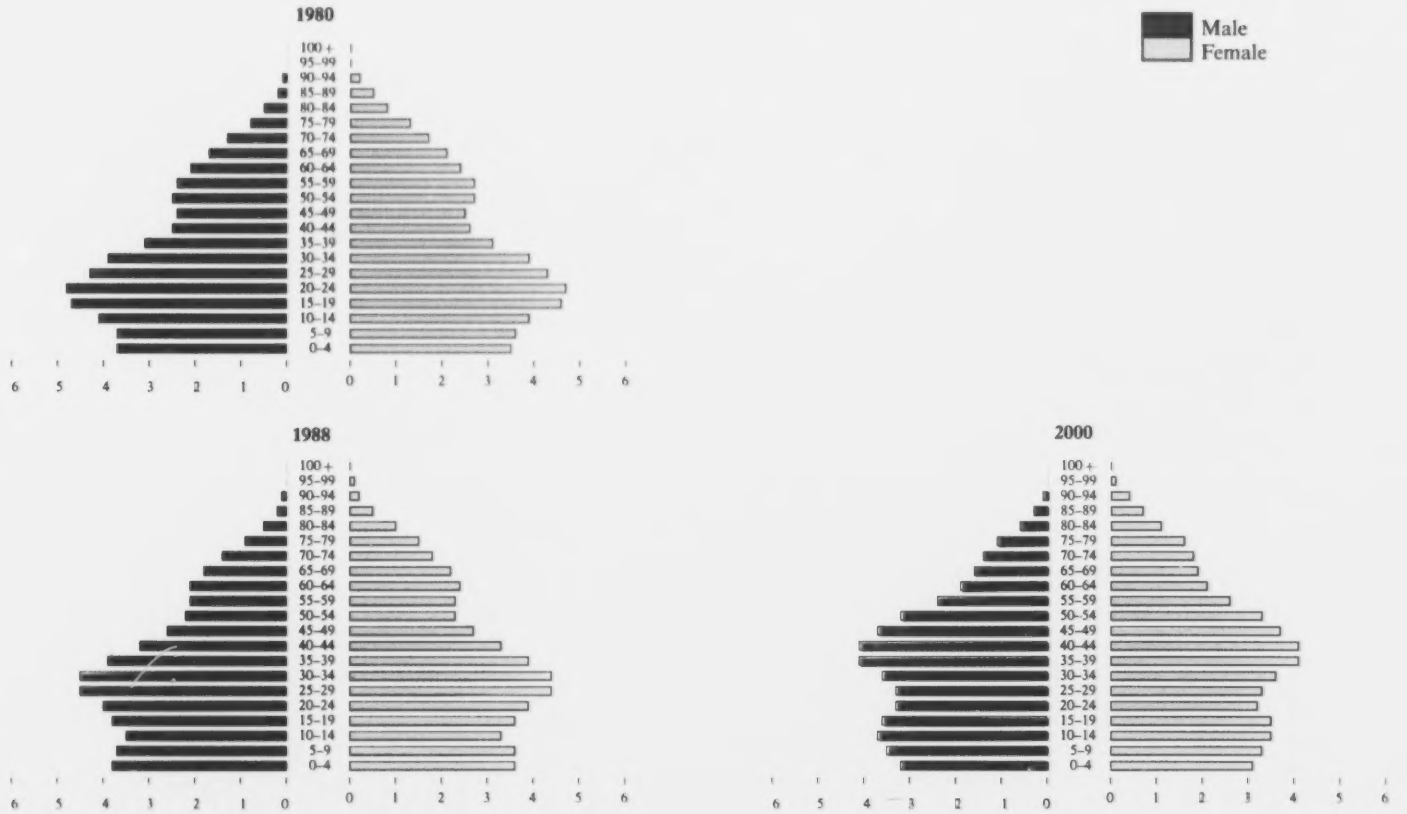
These population pyramids depict how dramatically the U.S. population has aged since 1960, and how it will continue to age in the future. The bulge at the base of the 1960 pyramid is the Baby Boom, concentrated in the under 15 age group. With each successive pyramid, the bulge moves upward as the Baby Boomers age. The slight widening at the bottom of the 1988 pyramid is the "echo effect"—the children of the original Baby Boomers. This increase in births is not expected to be long-term, however, as can be seen by the pinch in the bar for children under 5 for the year 2000.

Shifts in the age structure can be an important influence on the composition and social and economic characteristics of households and families. Racial and ethnic minority populations, most notably Blacks and Hispanics, have had and will likely continue to have higher growth rates than the White population.

Figure 1.

(In percent)



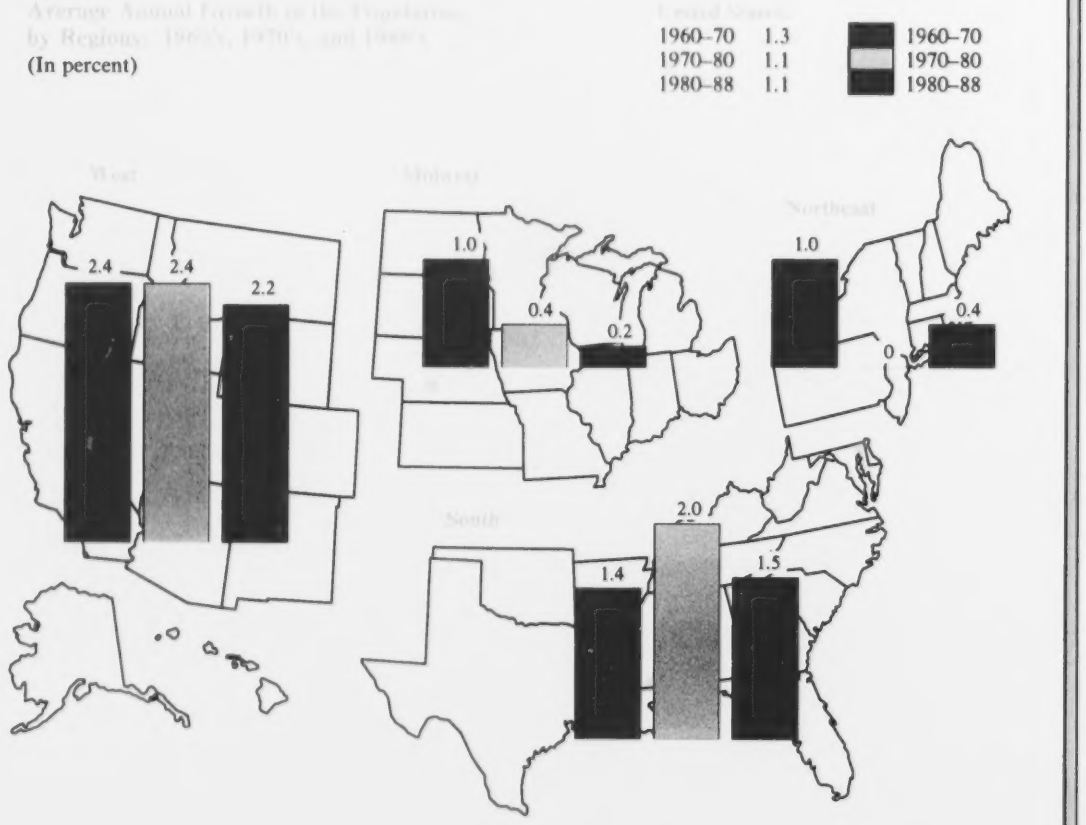

1980
1988
2000
Male
Female
100+
95–99
90–94
85–89
80–84
75–79
70–74
65–69
60–64
55–59
50–54
45–49
40–44
35–39
30–34
25–29
20–24
15–19
10–14
5–9
0–4
6 5 4 3 2 1 0
0 1 2 3 4 5 6

Regional Population Growth

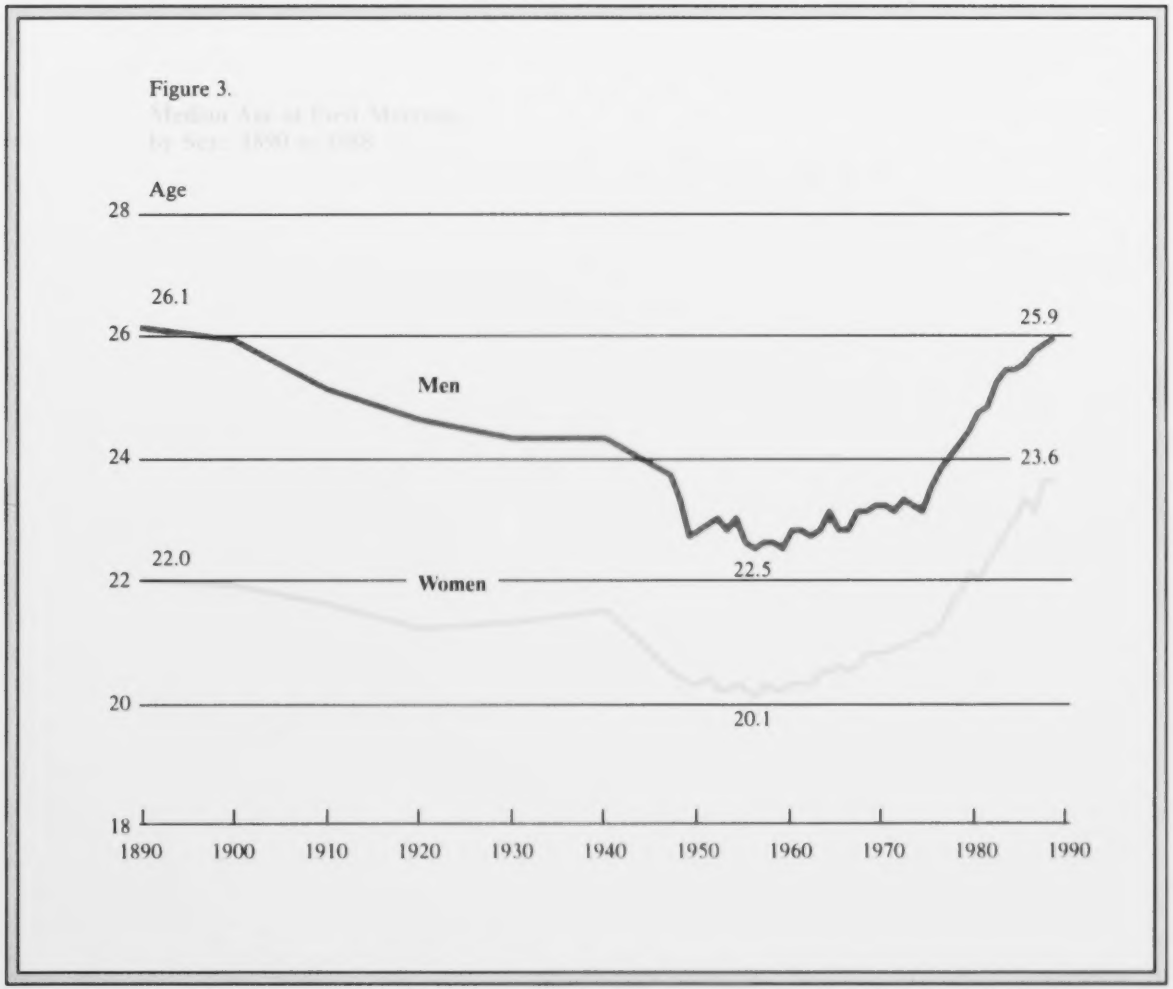
The regional pattern of population growth seen in the 1970's has continued into the 1980's. The South and West Regions continue to grow disproportionately more than the Northeast and Midwest; 90 percent of the national population growth from 1970 to 1980 occurred in the South and West. Since 1980, the growth has been slower for all regions except the Northeast. Half of the growth in the South and West was due to net inmigration, while the Northeast and Midwest experienced net outmigration.

Regional population growth affects national political representation and the revenue bases for individual states.

Figure 2.
(In percent)



Age at First Marriage



Since the mid–1950's, the estimated median age at first marriage has moved upward gradually, increasing by about 3 years for both men and women. The median age at first marriage for men (25.9 in 1988) now stands at a level close to the age for men in 1900. The median age at first marriage for women (23.6 in 1988) has been higher during the 1980's than at any previously recorded time.

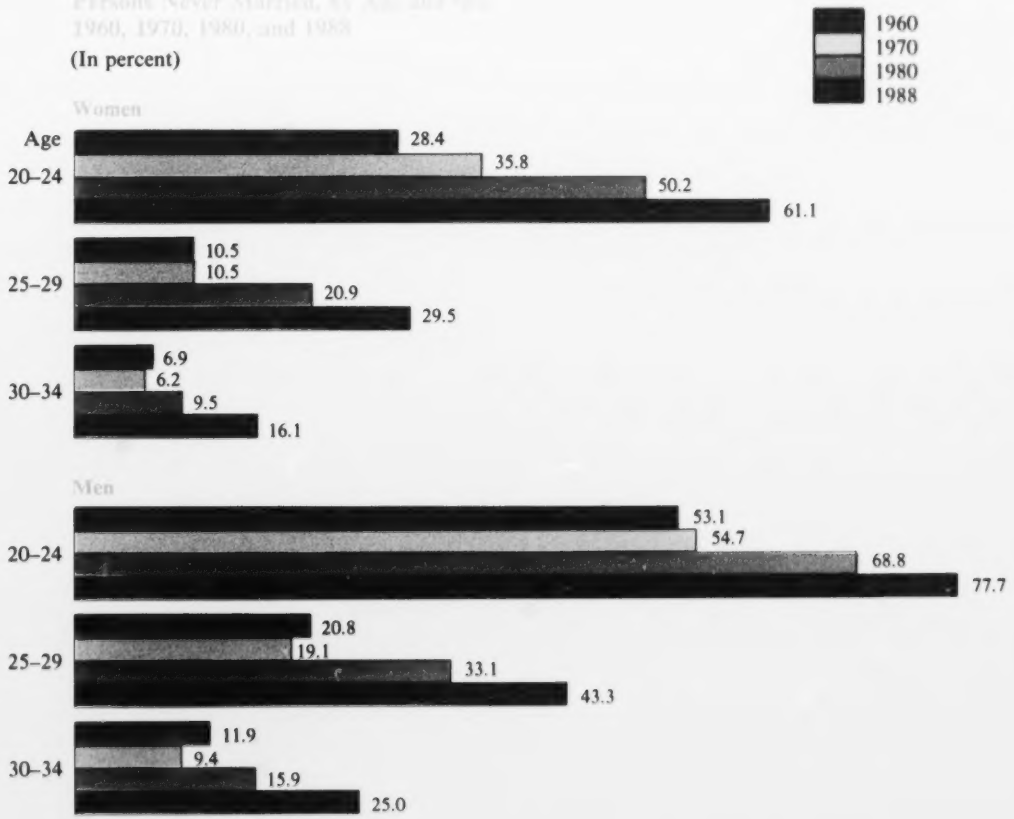
The increasing age at first marriage is associated with increases in educational attainment and women's labor force participation, as well as delayed and reduced fertility, and potentially increased marital stability.

Percent Single

The postponement of marriage is reflected in the substantial rise in the proportion of men and women of prime marrying age who have not yet married for the first time. While proportions not yet married for men and women showed little or no change between 1960 and 1970, rapid increases occurred between 1970 and 1988. The proportions of men in their late twenties and early thirties who have not yet married doubled since 1970, and the proportions of women have nearly tripled. Although, increases in the percent never married are striking, it is estimated that 90 percent will ultimately marry.

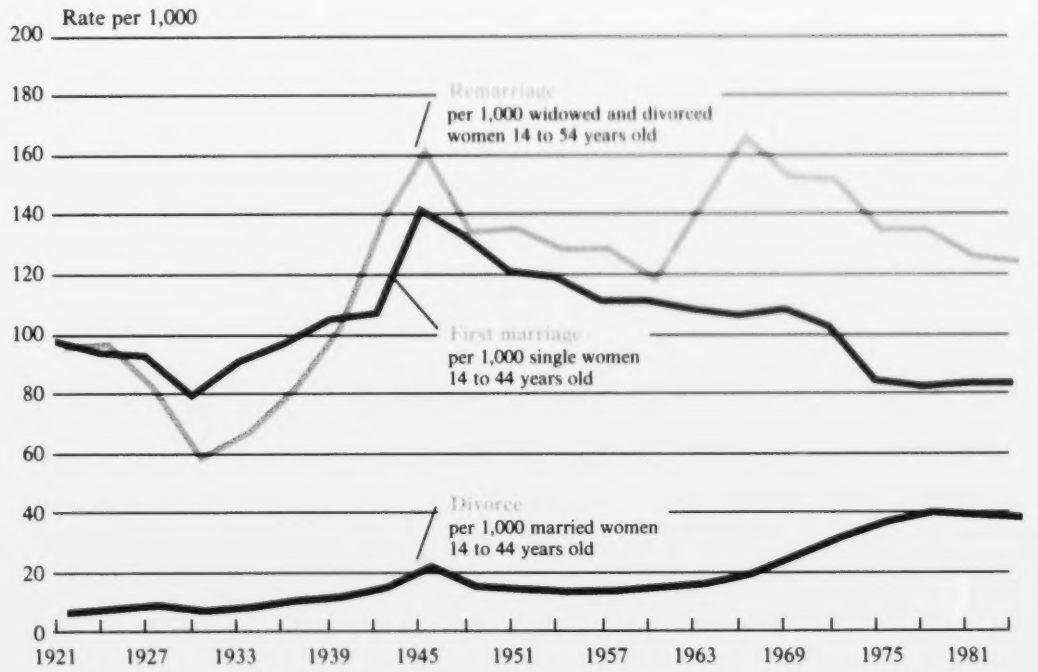
In addition to the associations mentioned for figure 3, an increase in singleness also may contribute to increases in premarital births as women spend a larger part of their childbearing years in an unmarried status.

Figure 4.
Persons Never Married, by Age and Sex: 1960, 1970, 1980, and 1988
(In percent)



Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage

Figure 5.
Rates of First Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage for Women: 1921 to 1984
(In 3–year averages)



Rates of first marriage, divorce, and remarriage for women are beginning to stabilize after fluctuating considerably over the last half century. First marriage rates declined during the 1970's and have remained at low levels into the 1980's because young women are delaying marriage or perhaps never marrying at all.

Teenage marriages have a higher risk of ending in divorce than do marriages that occur at older ages. If current trends persist, 1 out of 2 marriages that have occurred since the early 1970's could end in divorce. However, the majority of persons who do divorce after first marriage will remarry.

Changes in marital behavior have led to increases in single-parent families, smaller households, families with lower incomes, and more blended or reconstituted families from remarriages.

Fertility

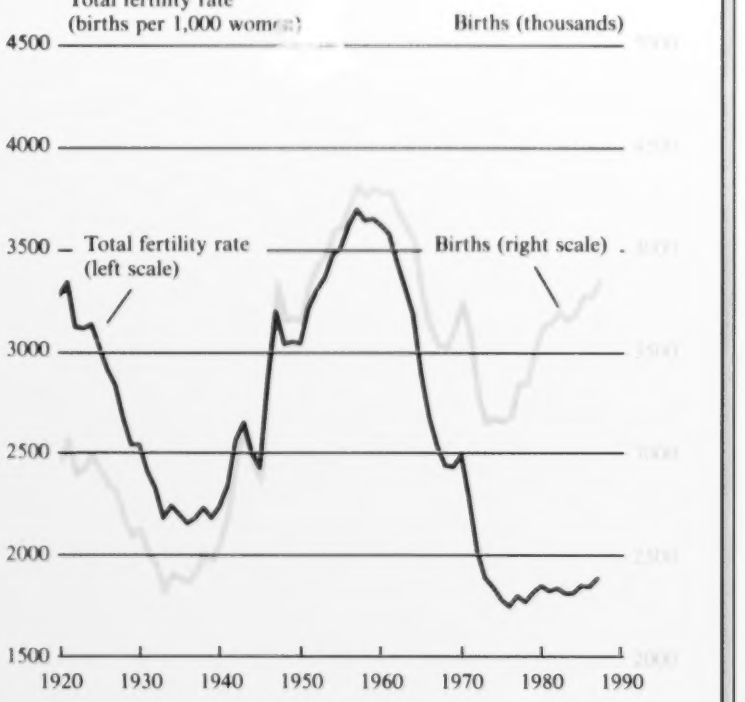
The decline in the total fertility rate since 1960 indicates that children will have fewer, if any, brothers and sisters. The total fertility rate is the estimated number of children that a woman would have at the end of her childbearing years based on the current fertility rate.

In 1960, the total fertility rate was about 3,700 births per 1,000 women or 3.7 children per woman. This rate dropped to about 1.8 children in 1975 and has continued at about that level through 1988. Although the total fertility rate has leveled off, the number of births has risen dramatically since the mid–1970's. This is because there are many more women of childbearing age as a result of the Baby Boom.

Most women expect to have, on average, two children, and only about 1 of every 10 women of childbearing age expects to remain childless. Recent evidence suggests more women may remain childless than expected, and that they, on average, will bear slightly fewer children than expected.

Lower fertility influences the overall population age structure, family size, employment of parents, school enrollment trends, and qualitative aspects of parent-child relationships.

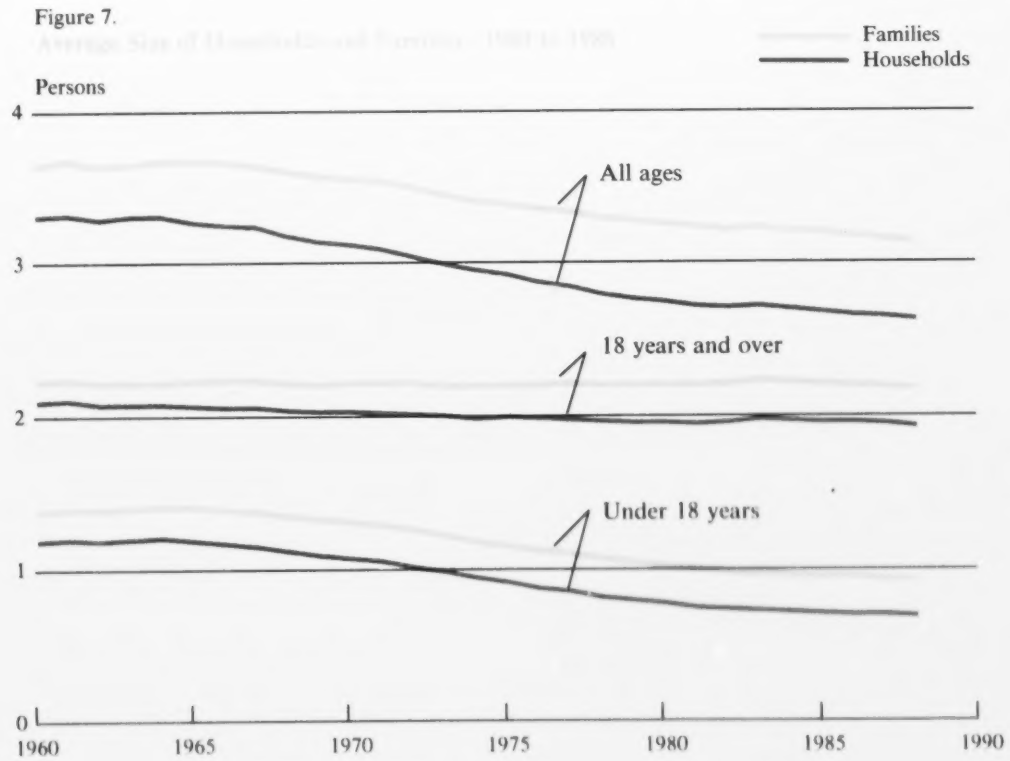
Figure 6.



Household and Family Size

Changes in the composition of households and families resulting from changes in marital and fertility patterns have contributed to a decline in the average number of persons in these housing units. Fewer children per family, more one-parent families, and larger numbers of people living alone are all among the factors contributing to the trend toward smaller households and families which began during the mid-1960's. In 1988, there were 2.64 persons per household and 3.17 persons per family. These averages have never been lower.

Figure 7.



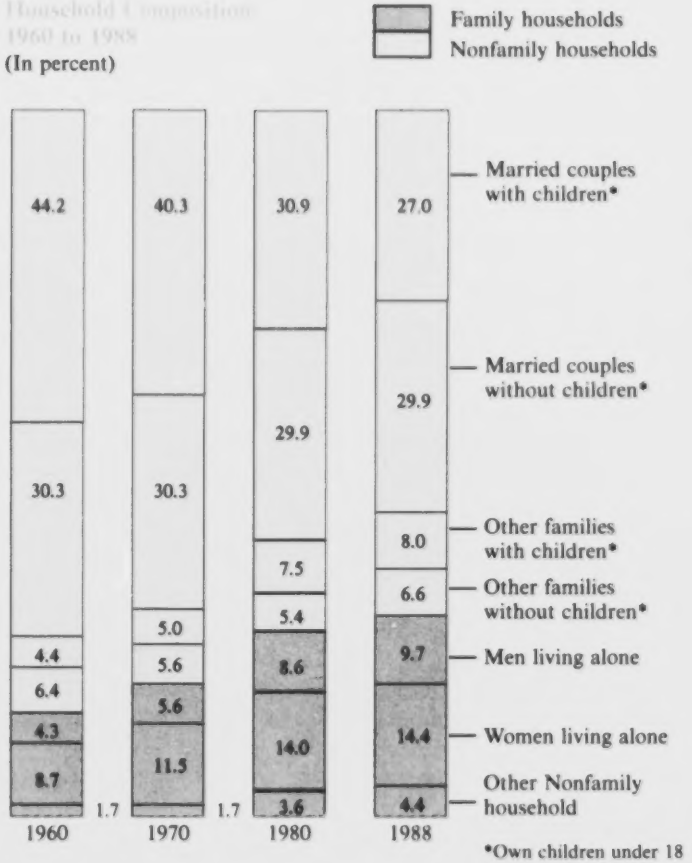
Household Composition

The Census Bureau has two major categories of households: family and nonfamily. A family household consists of the householder and at least one additional person related to the householder through marriage, birth, or adoption. A nonfamily household is composed of a householder who either lives alone or exclusively with persons unrelated to the householder.

Married-couple households dropped from 75 percent of all households in 1960 to 57 percent in 1988. This decline is entirely due to a drop in married-couple households with children present. These families with children accounted for 27 percent of households in 1988, down from 44 percent of households in 1960, while the proportion of other families with children increased from 4 to 8 percent during that time. Almost two-thirds (65 percent) of households in 1988 were either nonfamily households or families with no children under age 18 present, which is a substantial increase over the corresponding proportion for 1960 (51 percent).

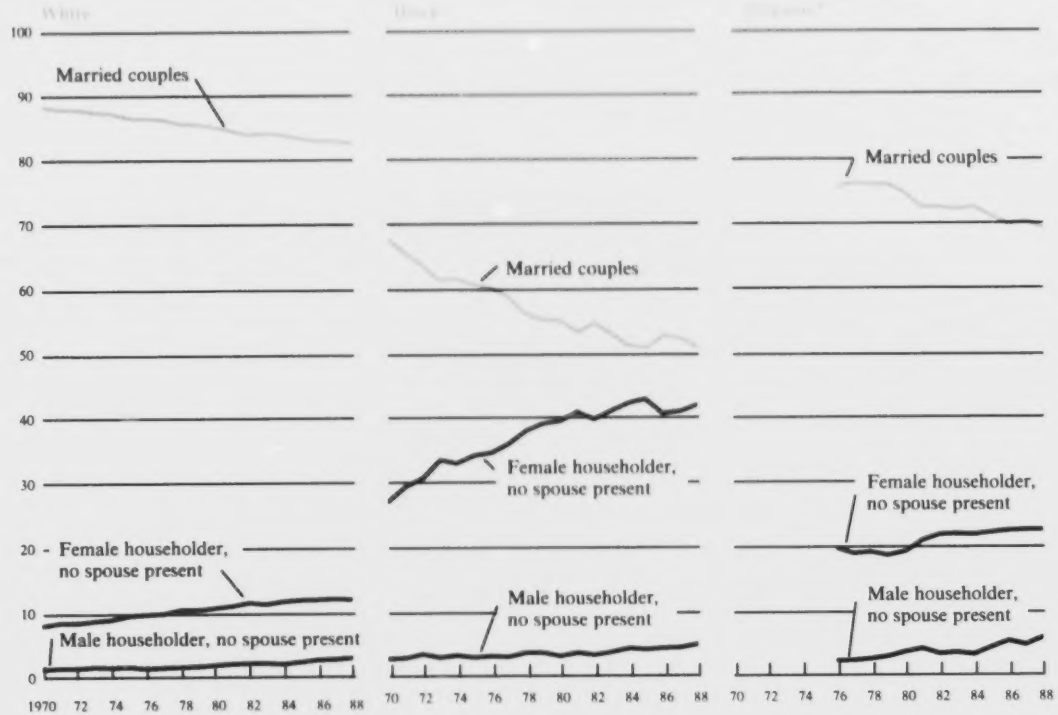
Presence of children in families is closely associated with the age of the members and their stage of life (e.g. some families have not yet begun their childbearing phase while other families have completed their childrearing phase).

Figure 8.
Household Composition: 1960 to 1988
(In percent)



Families by Type

Figure 9.
Type of Family as a Percent of All Family Householders, by Race: 1970 to 1988



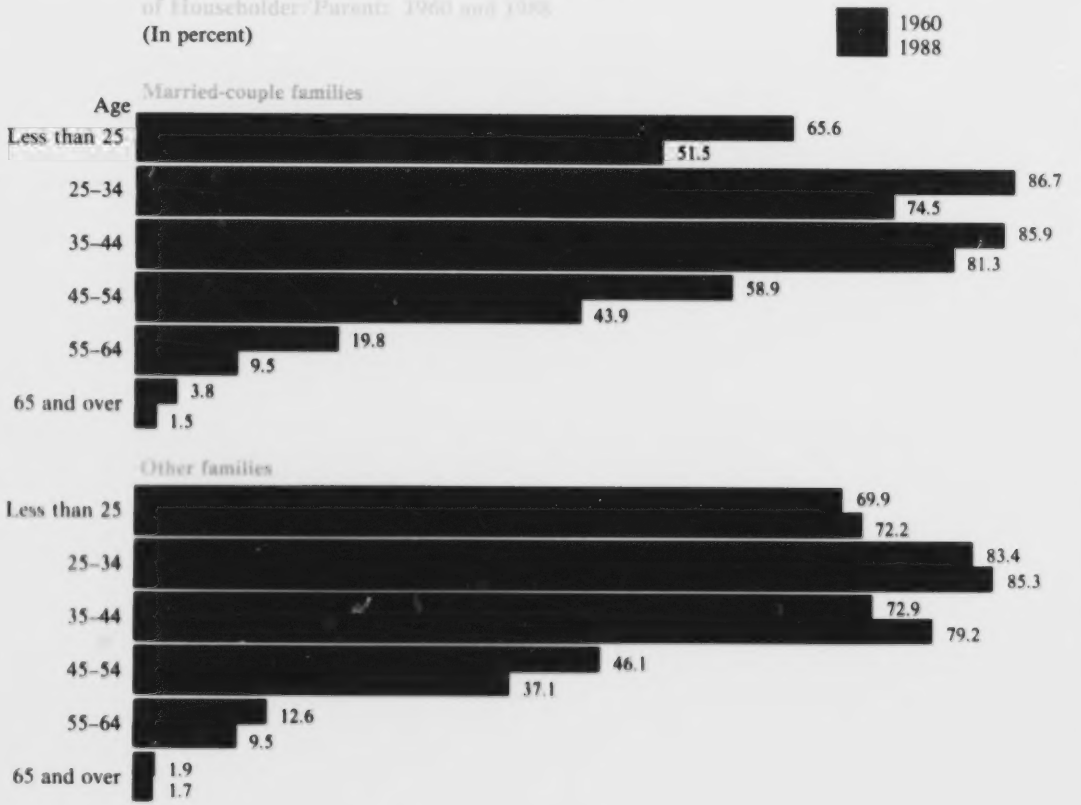
*Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race

Families are classified into three categories: married-couple, female householder with no husband present, and male householder with no wife present. Although composition of Black families differs from that of White families, overall, both groups have seen an increase in families maintained by female householders. Between 1970 and 1988, the proportion of families maintained by women alone increased from 28 to 43 percent of Black families, and from 9 to 13 percent of White families. The proportion of Hispanic families maintained by women alone increased from 21 percent in 1976 to 23 percent in 1988.

Presence of Children by Age of Parent

In 1988, 51 percent of all families had no own children under 18 years of age present in the household. Traditionally, children are most likely to be found in families with householders under age 45. However, regardless of the householder's age, children were less likely to be present in married-couple families in 1988 than in 1960. For other types of families, this was not always the case: families maintained by men or women under age 45 whose spouse was absent were more likely to have a child present in 1988 than in 1960. This is another consequence of the rise in single-parent families.

Figure 10.
Families With Own Children Under Age 18, by Age of Householder/Parent: 1960 and 1988
(In percent)

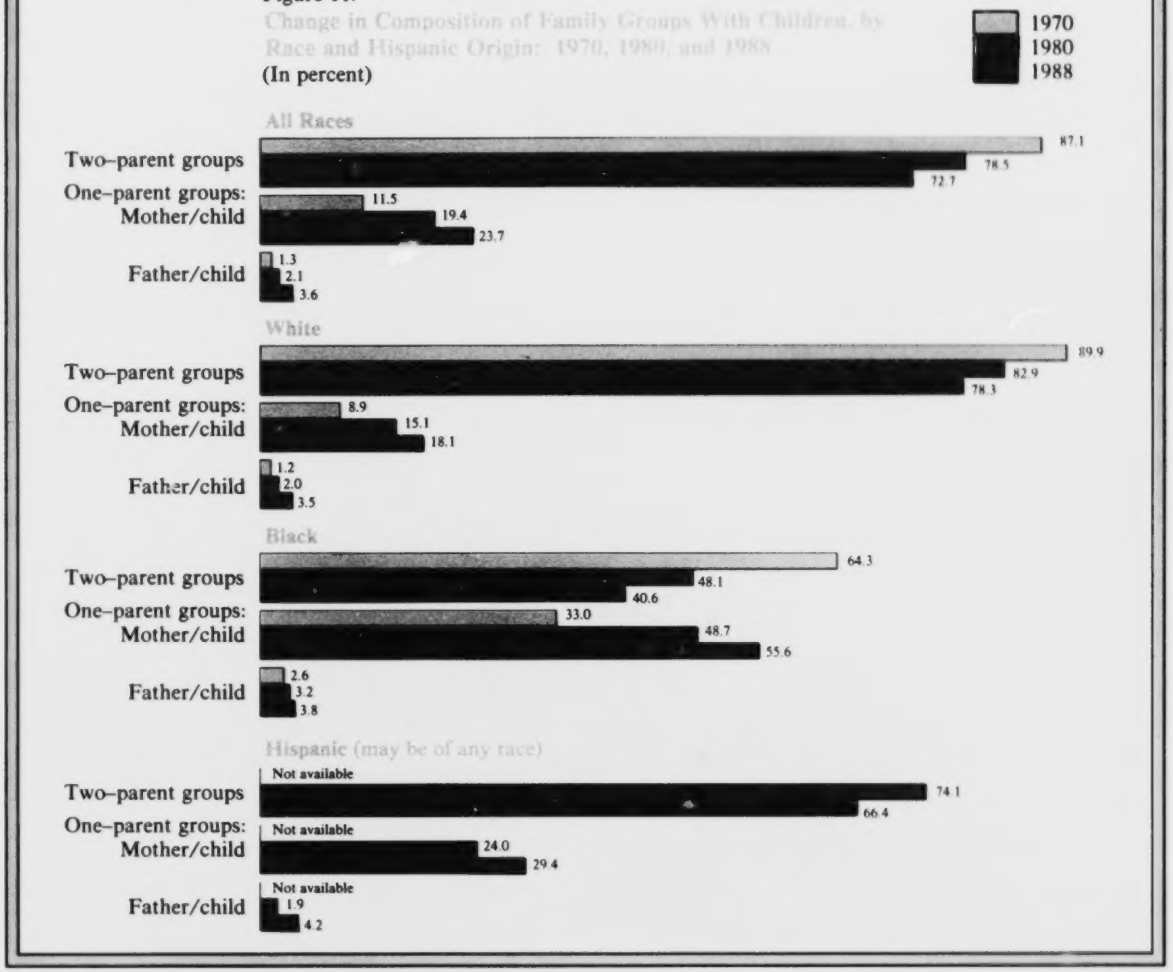


One-parent Situations

One-parent families have increased substantially since 1970. This family type is created either by premarital birth, separation, divorce, widowhood, or adoption. Slightly less than 9 of every 10 one-parent families are maintained by women.

Single parents accounted for 27 percent of all family groups with children under 18 years old in 1988, more than twice the 1970 proportion. Among Whites, about 22 percent of all family groups that included children under 18 were maintained by single parents, compared with 59 percent among comparable Black families, and 34 percent among Hispanics (who may be of any race). Because these families are less likely than others to have adequate economic and social resources available, they can often be disadvantaged.

Figure 11.
Change in Composition of Family Groups With Children, by Race and Hispanic Origin: 1970, 1980, and 1988
(In percent)



Living Arrangements of Children

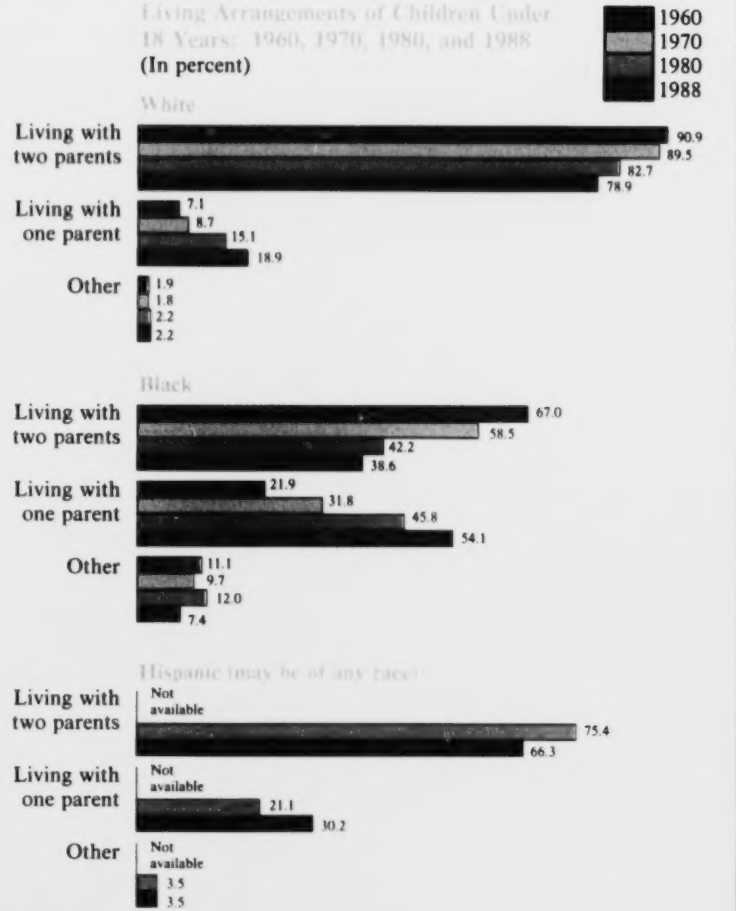
The marital status of adults directly influences the living arrangements of children. As more adults in their prime childbearing years remain single, and as divorce increases, the proportion of children living with two parents falls and the proportion living with one parent rises. "Other" living arrangements, shown on the chart, include children in foster homes and others not living with a parent (institutional living arrangements excluded).

Out of the 63.2 million children under 18 years in 1988, 15.3 million, or 24 percent, were currently living with only one parent, compared with 12 percent in 1970 and 9 percent in 1960.

Nearly 9 out of 10 children in a single-parent situation live with the mother. Black children had the highest proportion living with one parent: 54 percent as compared with 19 percent for White children and 30 percent for Hispanic children.

While these statistics reflect only current living arrangements, the proportion of children who have ever experienced a single-parent living arrangement is higher. It is estimated that 60 percent of the children born today will spend at least some portion of their childhood in a one-parent situation.

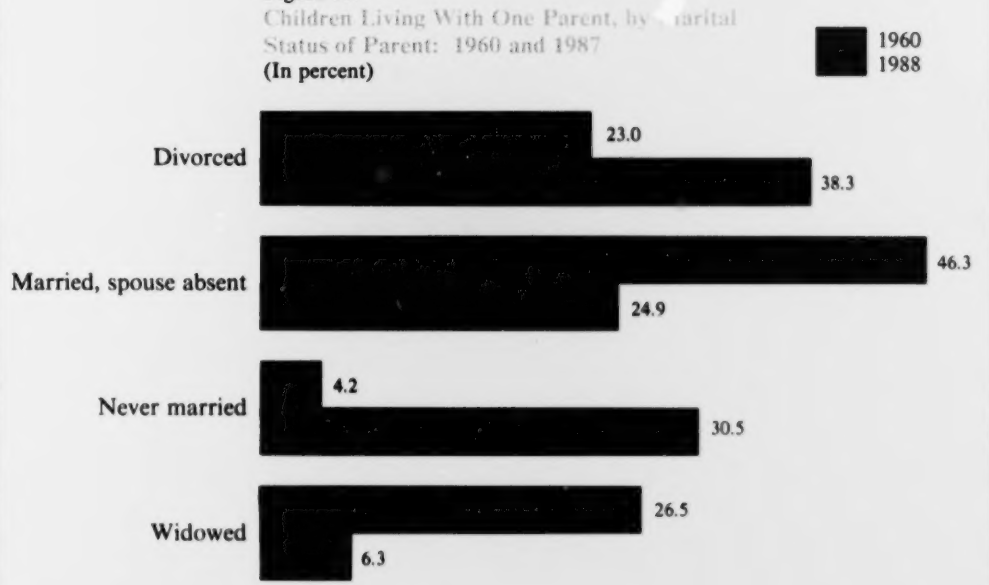
Figure 12.
Living Arrangements of Children Under 18 Years: 1960, 1970, 1980, and 1988
(In percent)



Children Living With One Parent by Marital Status of Parent

Divorce and out-of-wedlock births are the largest contributors to the rise in children living with one parent. In 1988, 38 percent of the children in a one-parent situation lived with a divorced parent and 31 percent with a never-married parent; the 1960 proportions were 23 percent and 4 percent, respectively. Some of the increase in children living with a never-married parent may be due to an improvement in data collection and processing in recent years.

Figure 13.
Children Living With One Parent, by Marital Status of Parent: 1960 and 1987
(In percent)



Children in Stepfamilies

High divorce and remarriage rates in recent years have resulted in many children living in families with one natural and one stepparent. The combination of families brings about complex relationships involving step, half, and full siblings. The complexities associated with these blended families are not yet well understood.

Figure 14.
Children, by Presence of Parents and Type of Family: 1985
(In percent)

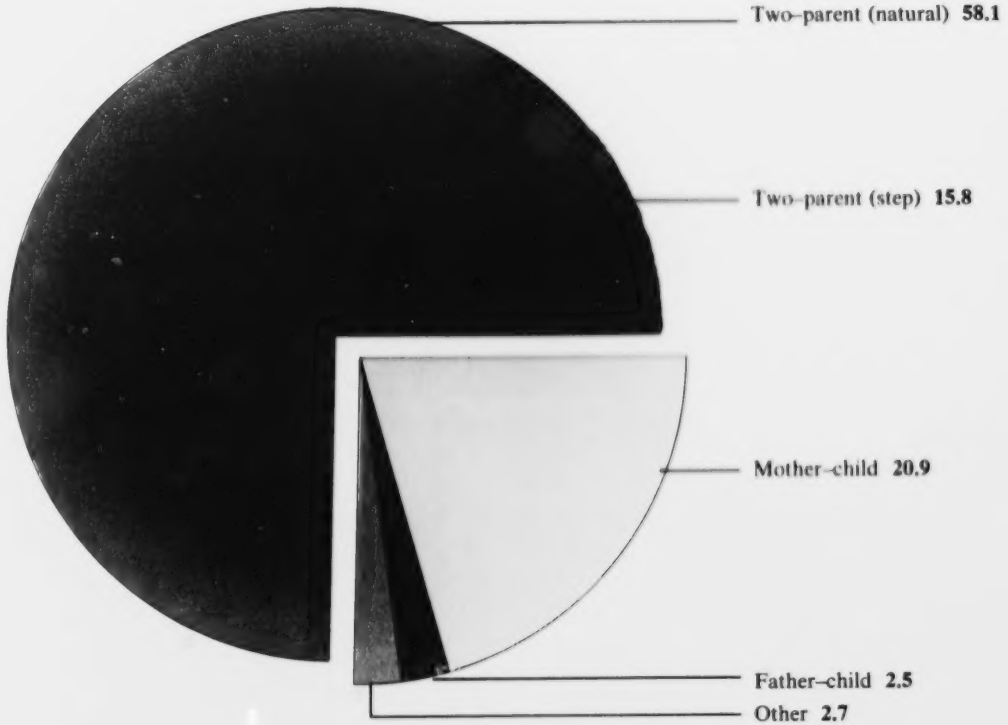
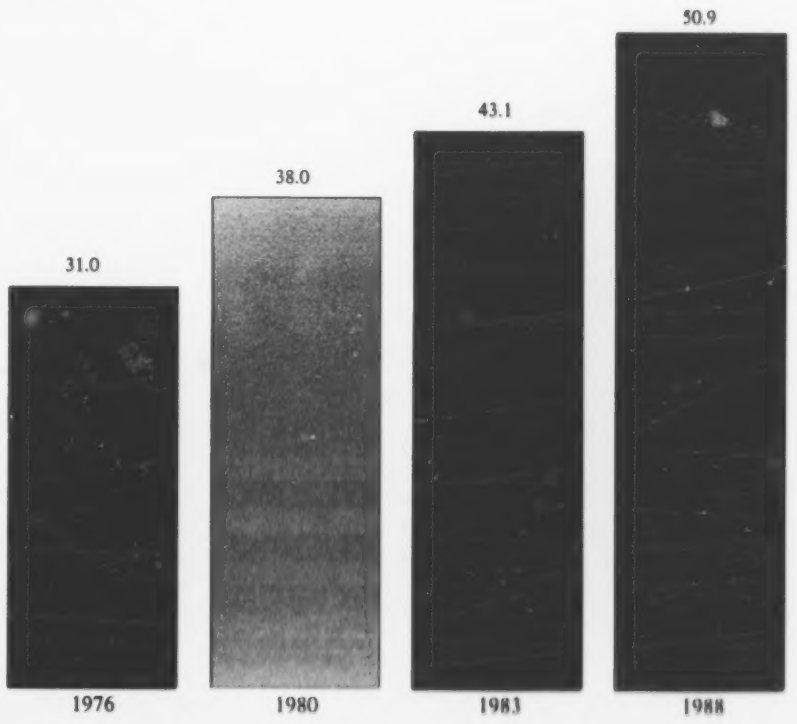


Figure 15.
Women 18 to 44 Years Old in the Labor Force Who Had a Child in the Preceding 12 Months: 1976 to 1988
(In percent)



Labor Force Characteristics of Mothers With Newborn Children

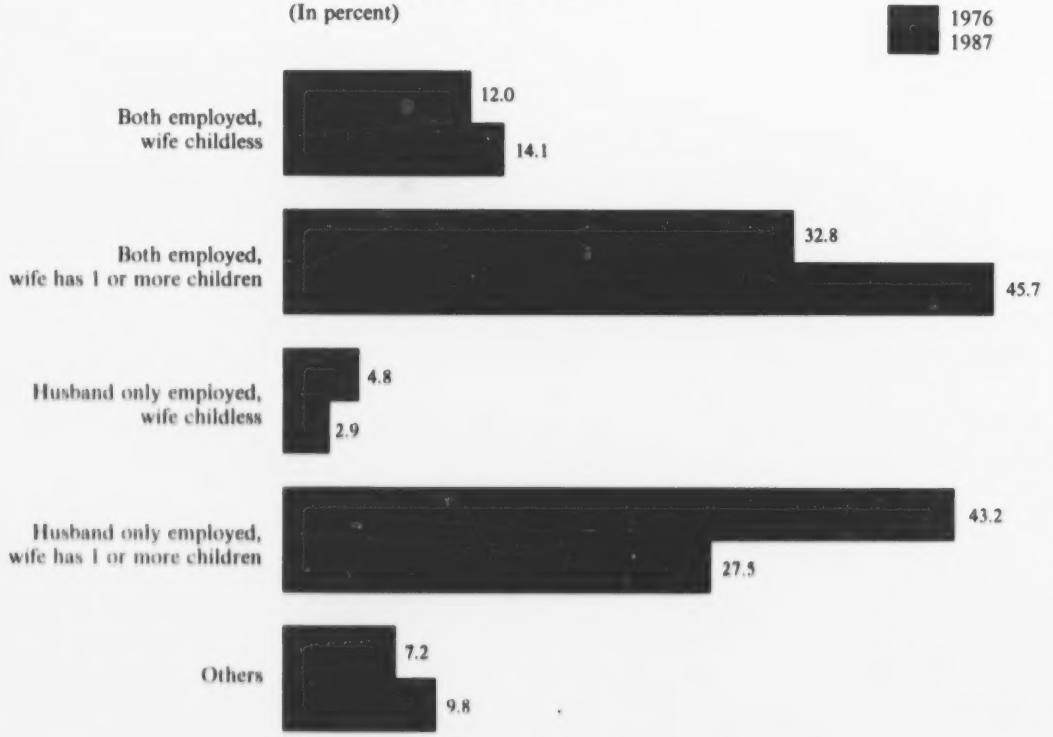
The labor force participation rate for women 18 to 44 years old with newborn children (less than 1 year old) was 51 percent in 1988—a significant increase from the 31 percent in 1976 (the first year the Census Bureau recorded these statistics). About 1.9 million women with infants were in the labor force in June 1988, up from 865,000 in June 1976; 1.7 million women with infants were employed at the time of the 1988 survey while another 0.2 million were unemployed.

These data illustrate the strength of the labor force attachment of young women and the growing need for child care services.

Employment Status of Husband and Wife

The increased participation of women in the paid labor force has been one of the most important recent developments affecting family life. Although single mothers (no husband present) have increased their labor force participation rates from 62 percent in 1976 to 69 percent in 1987, the most dramatic increase has been for married women (especially young mothers). The proportion of all married-couple families with both partners working increased from 37 percent in 1976 to 49 percent in 1987. Moreover, among married couples with the wife between 18 and 44 years old, the proportion with husband only employed and wife and child(ren) at home dropped from 43 percent in 1976 to 28 percent in 1987. Meanwhile, the dual-earner couples with children rose from 33 percent to 46 percent.

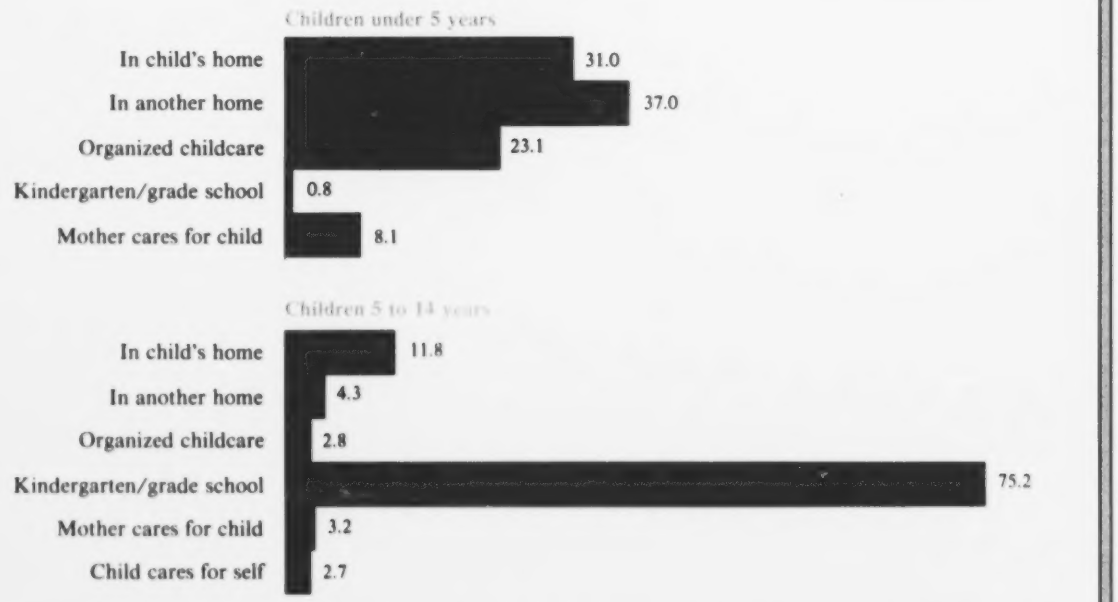
Figure 16.
Distribution of Married Couples, by Employment Status and Fertility: June 1976 and 1987
(In percent)



Primary Child Care Arrangements

One obvious consequence of increased parental involvement in the paid work force has been an upsurge in the need for child care services. For example, in 1977, 13 percent of employed women with a child under 5 years old used organized day care, but by 1985, one-fourth were using organized day care. The most recent survey data available show that working women with preschool-age children use a wider variety of child care arrangements than do working women with older children in school. Thirty-one percent of preschoolers with a working mother were cared for in their own homes, principally by the children's father, while 37 percent were cared for in another home. Organized child care (day or group care centers and nursery school/preschool) was used by 23 percent of children under 5 years. In addition, 8 percent were cared for by their mother while she was working either at home or away from home.

Figure 17.
Child Care Arrangements for Children of Working Mothers: Winter 1984–85
(In percent)



Seventy-five percent of the grade-school-age children with a working mother were either in kindergarten or grade school most of the hours their mothers were at work. This does not mean that the remaining 25 percent were not enrolled in school; rather it implies that the majority of hours the mothers worked did not necessarily coincide with their children's school day. Of those not in school most of the time, 12 percent were cared for in their own home, principally by their father, while another 3 percent were left unsupervised most of the time their mothers were at work.

Educational Attainment of Parent

Since 1960, the educational attainment of parents with children present has increased significantly. In 1960, one-half of the reference persons in married-couple families and 62 percent of the mothers in mother-child families had completed less than 4 years of high school. By 1988, the proportions were less than half as large, while the proportion who had continued on to college doubled.

The proportion of parents with 1 to 3 years of college rose from 10 to 19 percent for the reference person in married-couple families, and similarly from 8 percent to 19 percent for mothers in mother-child families but, the proportion of those with 4 or more years of college rose from 12 to 26 percent (married-couple) and from 4 to 10 percent (mother-child).

Figure 18.
Educational Attainment of Parent: 1960, 1970, 1980, and 1988
(In percent)

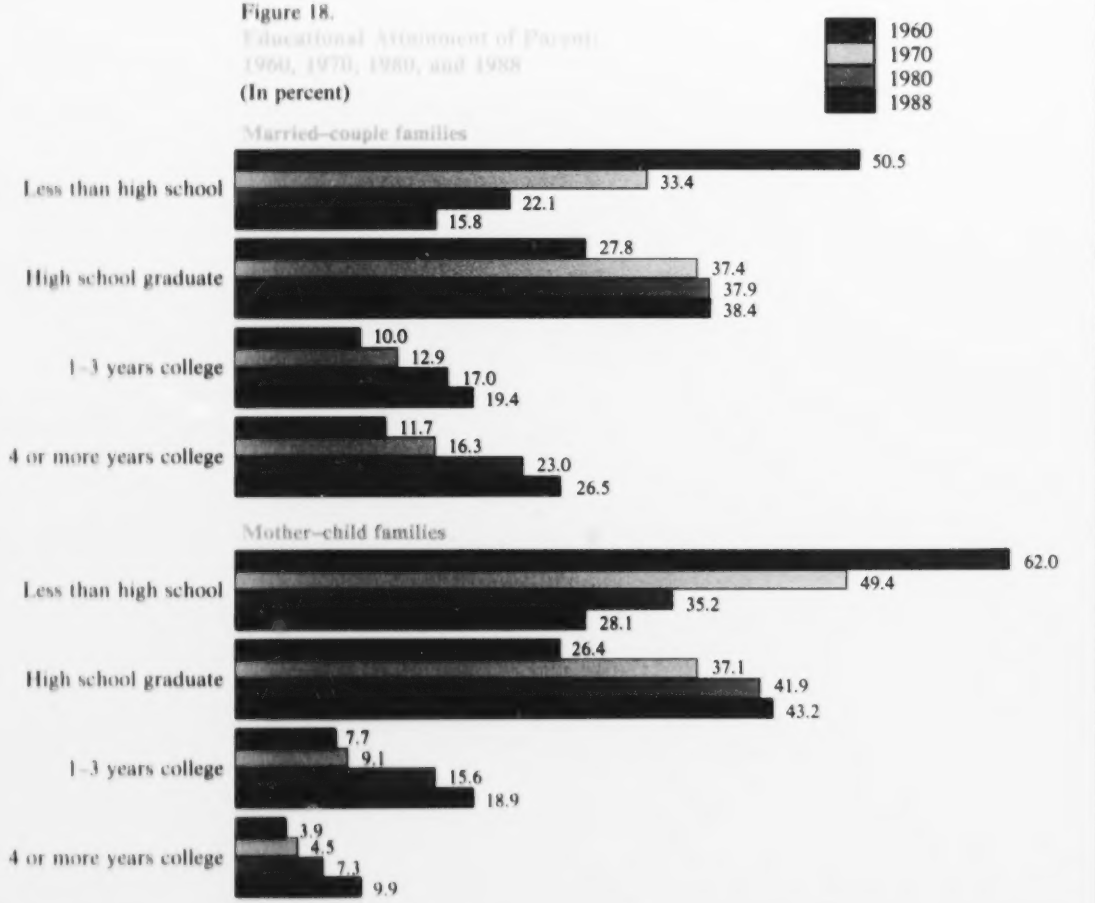
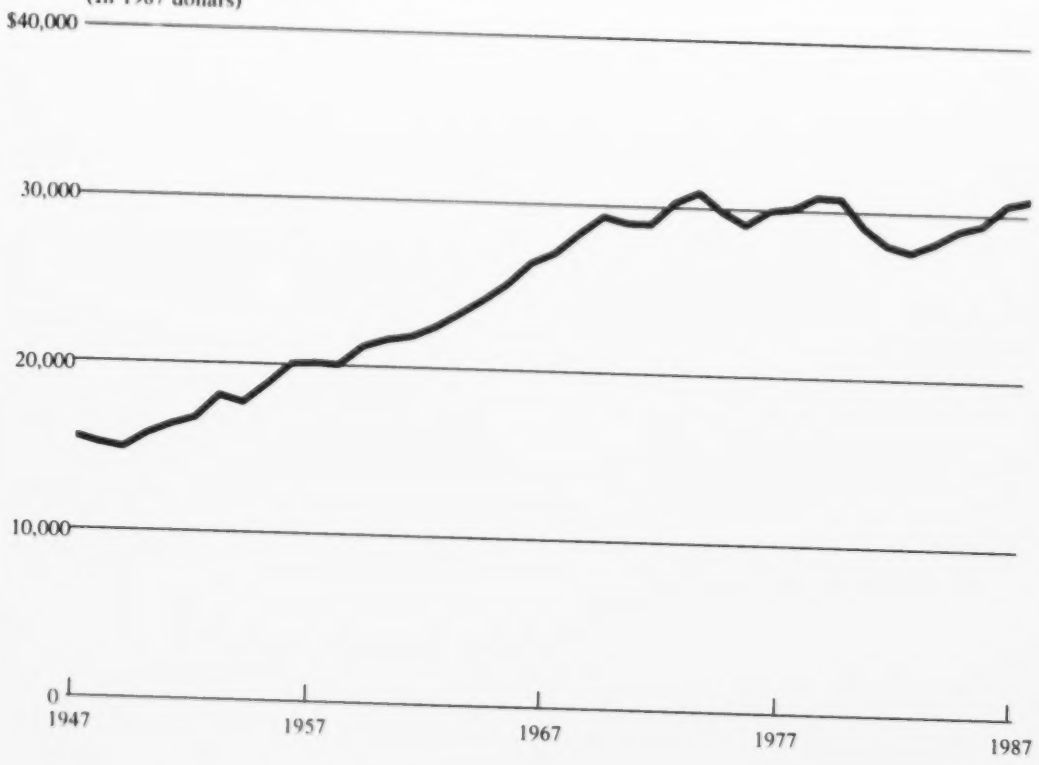


Figure 19.
Median Family Income: 1947 to 1987
(In 1987 dollars)



Trends in Median Family Income

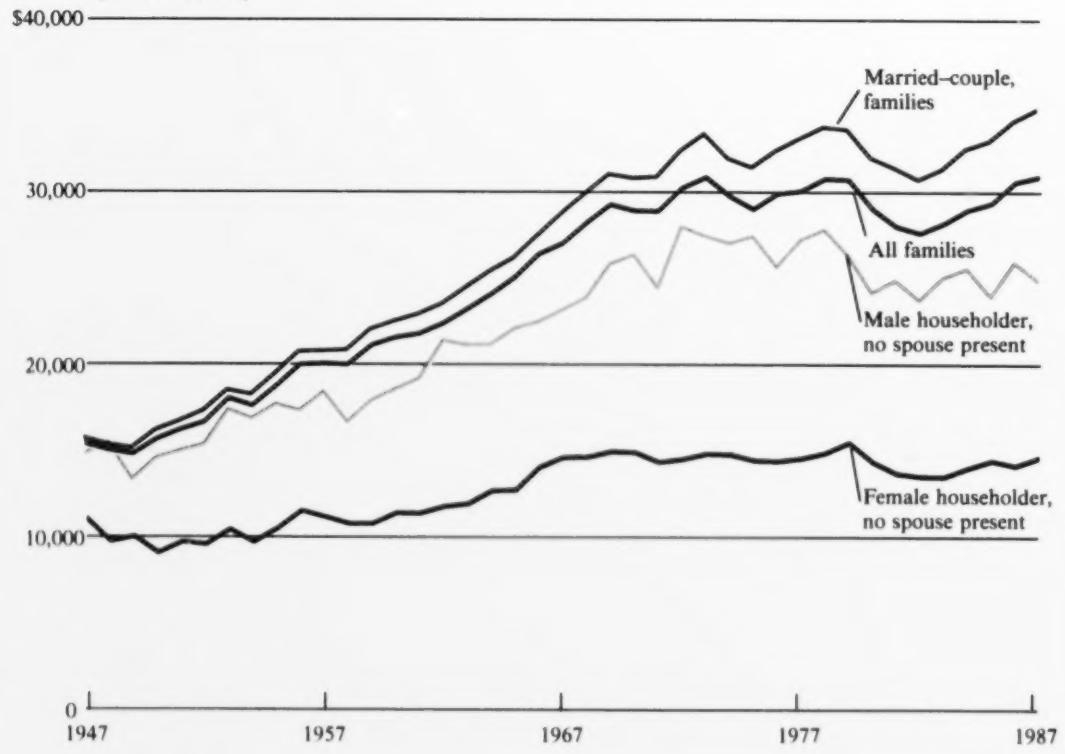
Median income over time is best studied after adjusting for inflation (expressed as 1987 dollars or real income). The 1987 real median family income was $30,853, 1.0 percent higher than the real median for 1986 ($30,534). Since 1982, real median family income has increased by 11.8 percent. These recent increases have brought real median family income to a level comparable to that of 1973 ($30,820), an earlier alltime high. Real median family income has almost doubled since 1947, when it was $15,422. Significant factors influencing these trends are the rise in one-parent families (which would tend to lower the median) and the increase in dual-earner families (which would tend to cause the median to rise).

Median Family Income by Type of Family

The relative economic disadvantage of families maintained by women appears to be growing at least in terms of the median family income measure. In 1987, the median income of married-couple families was $34,700 as compared with $14,620 for families maintained by women with no husband present. Since 1982, the real median income of married-couple families has risen 15.9 percent, with female householder families with no husband present increasing 4.6 percent.

While the real median income of all families has doubled since 1947 (from $15,422 to $30,853) and the real median income of married-couple families has more than doubled (from $15,820 to $34,700), the median income of families maintained by women alone has only grown by 32 percent (from $11,505 to $14,620). This is especially relevant in light of the fact that these families maintained by women represented 10.1 percent of all families in 1948, and 16.3 percent of all families in 1988.

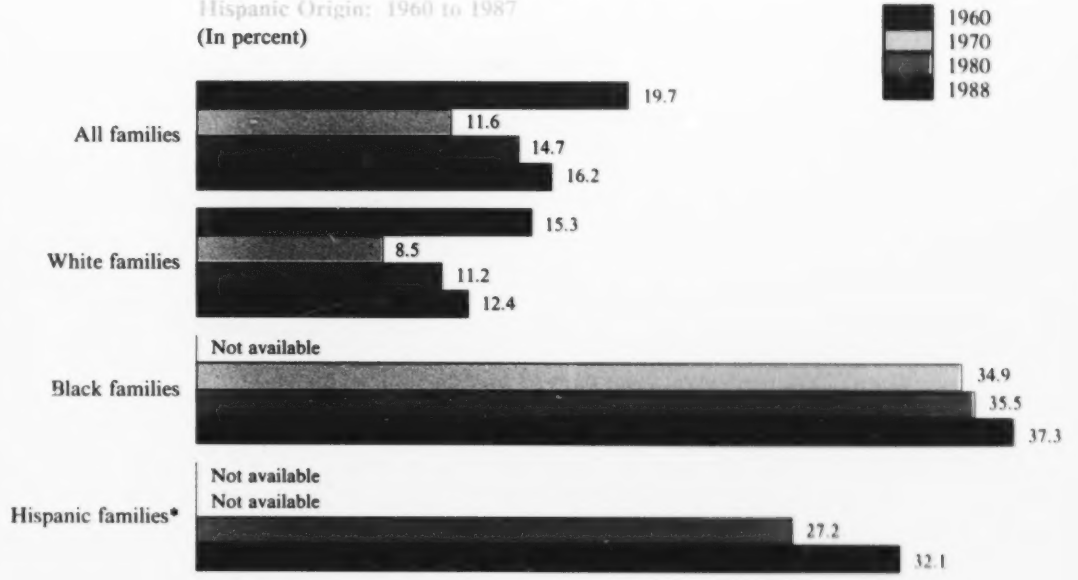
Figure 20.
Median Family Income, by Type of Family: 1947 to 1987
(In 1987 dollars)



Poverty Status of Families With Children

Nearly 1 of every 6 families with related children present in 1987 were living in poverty. The poverty rate for families with children declined between 1960 and 1970 but has increased since. Black families with children present were the most likely to be poor and White families were least likely to be poor. Hispanic families had poverty rates slightly lower than Black families. The same trends influencing changes in median family income also influence changes in the poverty rate, most notably the growth in one-parent families.

Figure 21.
Families With Related Children Under 18 Years That are Below the Poverty Level, by Race and Hispanic Origin: 1960 to 1987
(In percent)



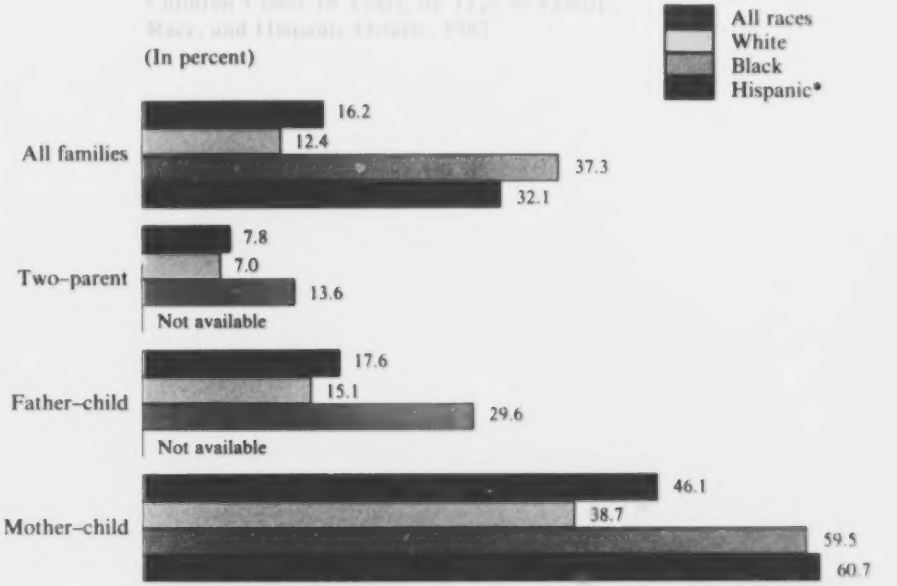
*Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race

Poverty Status of Families With Children by Type of Family

Two-parent families, regardless of race or ethnicity, have much lower poverty rates than one-parent families. The incidence of poverty is greatest for mother-child families, especially for Blacks and Hispanics, who have a poverty rate of about 60 percent.

Figure 22.

(In percent)

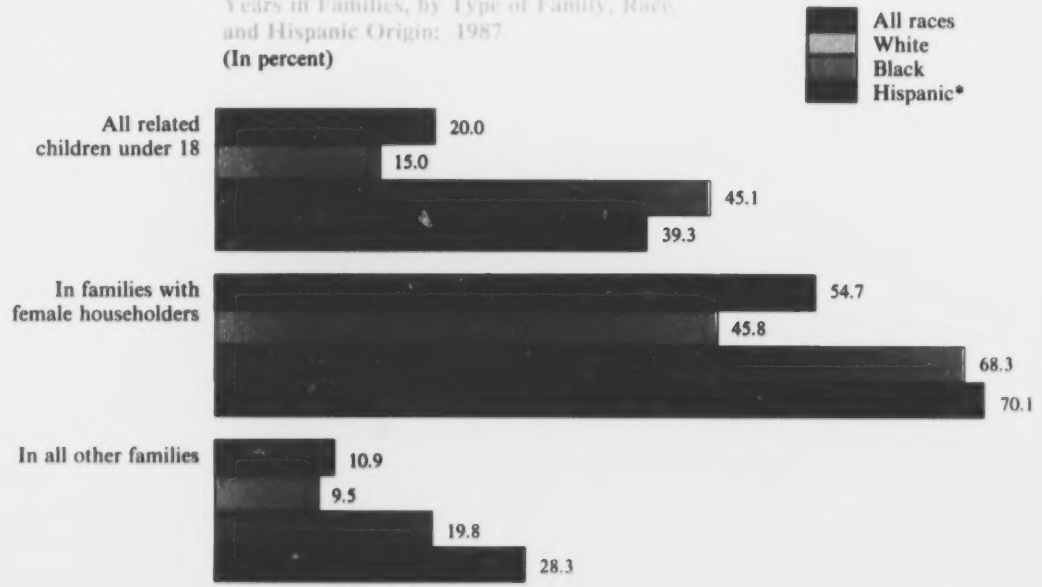


*Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race

Children in Poverty

More than half of all children in families maintained by a woman with no husband present were in poverty in 1987, and at least two-thirds of the children in Black and Hispanic families were living in poverty. Black children in families are more likely to be poor than White children, partly because Black children were much more likely to be in one-parent families.

Figure 23.
Poverty Status of Related Children Under 18 Years in Families, by Type of Family, Race, and Hispanic Origin: 1987
(In percent)



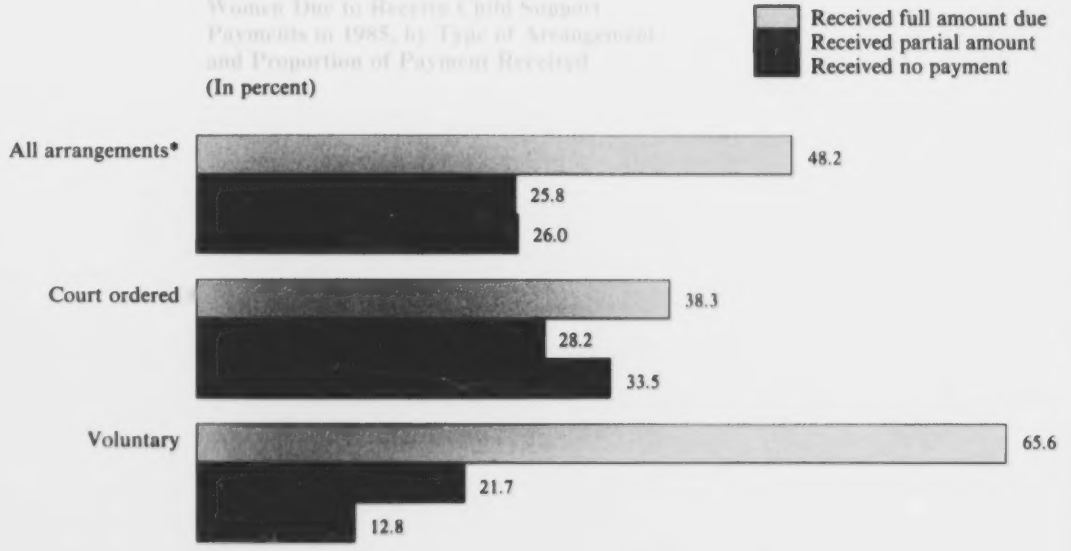
*Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race

Child Support

To some degree, the loss of income from an absent father is responsible for poverty among mother-child families. Although child support settlements are designed to alleviate economic hardships, some families do not receive payments as they should receive them.

About 4.4 million women were supposed to receive child support in 1985. Of those, about half received the full amount due, while the remaining women received either partial payment or no payment at all. Women whose child support payments were court ordered were much less likely to receive the full amount due than those who received voluntary payments (38 percent versus 66 percent). Similarly, those whose payments were court ordered were much more likely to actually receive no payment at all (34 percent) than those whose payment arrangements were voluntary (13 percent).

Figure 24.
Women Due to Receive Child Support Payments in 1985, by Type of Arrangement and Proportion of Payment Received
(In percent)



*A small number of women had "other" arrangement types, not shown separately

Future Directions

As you have seen, family life has dramatically changed over the short span of two decades. It seems likely, however, that most of the major change has already occurred and that a period of adaptation has begun.

A plausible scenario for the next decade is that there will be relative stability as compared with the upheaval of the recent past.

A majority of mothers will be in the paid work force and there will be a wide usage of a variety of child care arrangements.

Divorce rates will likely recede somewhat but still remain high enough to ensure that being a member of a single-parent family will be a fairly common experience.

Delayed marriage and childbearing and low fertility appear likely to continue as the norm. While childlessness may increase somewhat, birth expectation data indicate that the vast majority of women will bear at least one child.

The general aging of the population coupled with increases in longevity will result in more middle-aged parents being faced with providing assistance to both their children and their elderly parents or other relatives. Also, the aging trend and continued low fertility in the future may increase competition between the very young and the old for public program resources.

Changing technology and labor force requirements will cause changes to educational curricula so educational experiences will differ from age group to age group.

Ethnic and racial minorities will increase as a proportion of the total population. Their needs will continue to be an important public policy issue.

These are but a few of the possible future developments that may result from recent social, economic, and demographic trends. If the prediction of near term stability in many basic trends affecting families is accurate, then public and private sector planning for anticipating and accommodating the needs of families and their members may be more timely, accurate, and responsive.

Sources for Charts

All sources are published by the U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC.

Figure 1.
U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P–25, Nos. 519, 917, and 1018.

Figure 2.
_____, Series P–25, No. 1044, *State Population and Household Estimates, with Age, Sex, and Components of Change: 1981–88* (forthcoming), and earlier reports.

Figures 3 and 4.
_____, Series P–20, No. 433, *Marital Status and Living Arrangements: March 1988* (January 1989), and earlier reports.

Figure 5.
U.S. National Center for Health Statistics, Division of Vital Statistics.

Figure 6.
_____, Vital Statistics, Vol. 1, *Natality: 1986* (1988), and earlier reports. Data for 1987 and 1988 are unpublished estimates.

Figures 7 and 8.
U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P–20, No. 432, *Households, Families, Marital Status, and Living Arrangements: March 1988 (Advance Report)* (September 1988).

Figures 9, 10, and 11.
_____, Series P–20, No. 437, *Household and Family Characteristics: March 1988* (May 1989), and earlier reports.

Figures 12 and 13.
_____, Series P–20, No. 433, *Marital Status and Living Arrangements: March 1988* (January 1989).

Figure 14.
_____, Series P–20, No. 410, *Marital Status and Living Arrangements: March 1985* (November 1986), and unpublished data from the June 1985 Marital History Survey.

Figure 15.
_____, Series P–20, No. 436, *Fertility of American Women: June 1988* (May 1989).

Figure 16.
_____, Series P–20, No. 427, *Fertility of American Women: June 1987* (May 1988).

Figure 17.
_____, Series P–70, No. 9, *Who's Minding the Kinds? Child Care Arrangements: Winter 1984–85* (May 1987).

Figure 18.
_____, Series P–20, No. 437, *Household and Family Characteristics: March 1988* (May 1989), and earlier reports.

Figures 19 and 20.
_____, Series P–60, No. 162, *Money Income of Households, Families, and Persons in the United States: 1987* (February 1989), and unpublished data.

Figure 21.
_____, Series P–60, No. 161, *Money Income and Poverty Status in the United States: 1987 (Advance Data from the March 1988 Current Population Survey)* (August 1988).

Figures 22 and 23.
_____, Series P–60, No. 163, *Poverty in the United States: 1987* (February 1989).

Figure 24.
_____, Series P–23, No. 154, *Child Support and Alimony: 1985 (Supplemental Report)* (March 1989).

Source and Accuracy of the Data

Source of Data

Most estimates in this chart book come from data obtained in years 1960 through 1988 in the Current Population Survey (CPS). The Bureau of the Census conducts the survey every month. It uses two sets of questions, the basic CPS and the supplements. Some estimates come from 1960, 1970 and 1980 decennial census data.

Basic CPS. The basic CPS collects primarily labor force data about the civilian noninstitutional population. Interviewers ask questions concerning labor force participation about each member 14 years old and over in every sample household.

The present CPS sample was selected from the 1980 Decennial Census files with coverage in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The sample is continually updated to account for new residential construction. It is located in 729 areas comprising 1,973 counties, independent cities, and minor civil divisions. About 59,500 occupied households are eligible for interview every month. Interviewers are unable to obtain interviews at about 2,500 of these units because the occupants are not home after repeated calls or are unavailable for some other reason.

Since the introduction of the CPS, the Bureau of the Census has redesigned the CPS sample several times to improve the quality and reliability of the data and to satisfy changing data needs. The most recent changes were completely implemented in July 1985.

Monthly Supplements. In addition to the basic CPS questions, interviewers asked supplementary questions, differing in content from month to month. Topics include household and family size and marital status.

Estimation Procedure. This survey's estimation procedure inflates weighted sample results to independent estimates of the civilian noninstitutional population of the United States by age, sex, race and Hispanic/non-Hispanic categories. The independent estimates were based on statistics from decennial censuses of population; statistics on births, deaths, immigration and emigration; and statistics on the size of the Armed Forces. The independent population estimates used for data collected in 1981 and later were based on updates to controls established by the 1980 Decennial Census. Data previous to 1981 were based on independent population estimates from the most recent decennial census. For more details on the change in independent estimates, see the section entitled "Introduction of 1980 Census Population Controls" in an earlier report (Series P-60, No. 133). The estimation procedure for the March supplement included a further adjustment so husband and wife of a household received the same weight.

The estimates in this chart book for 1985 through 1988 also employ a revised survey weighting procedure for persons of Hispanic origin. In previous years, weighted sample results were inflated to independent estimates of the noninstitutional population by age, sex, and race. There was no specific control of the survey estimates for the Hispanic population. Since then, the Bureau of the Census developed independent population controls for the Hispanic population by sex and detailed age groups. Revised weighting procedures incorporate these new controls. The independent population estimates include some, but not all, undocumented immigrants.

Accuracy of the Estimates

Since the CPS estimates come from a sample, they may differ from figures from a complete census using the same questionnaires, instructions, and enumerators. A sample survey estimate has two possible types of error: sampling and nonsampling. The accuracy of an estimate depends on both types of error, but the full extent of the nonsampling error is unknown. Consequently, one should be particularly careful when interpreting results based on a relatively small number of cases or on small differences between estimates. The standard errors for CPS estimates primarily indicate the magnitude of sampling error.

They also partially measure the effect of some nonsampling errors in responses and enumeration, but do not measure systematic biases in the data. (Bias is the average over all possible samples of the differences between the sample estimates and the desired value.)

Nonsampling Variability. Nonsampling errors can be attributed to many sources. These sources include the inability to obtain information about all cases in the sample, definitional difficulties, differences in the interpretation of questions, respondents' inability or unwillingness to provide correct information or to recall information, errors made in data collection such as in recording or coding the data, errors made in processing the data, errors made in estimating values for missing data, and failure to represent all units with the sample (undercoverage).

CPS undercoverage results from missed housing units and missed persons within sample households. Compared to the level of the 1980 Decennial Census, overall CPS undercoverage is about 7 percent. CPS undercoverage varies with age, sex, and race. Generally, undercoverage is larger for males than for females and larger for Blacks and other races combined than for Whites. As described previously, ratio estimation to independent age–sex–race–Hispanic population controls partially corrects for the bias due to undercoverage. However, biases exist in the estimates to the extent that missed persons in missed households or missed persons in interviewed households have different characteristics from those of interviewed persons in the same age–sex–race–Hispanic group. Furthermore, the independent population controls have not been adjusted for undercoverage in the 1980 census.

For additional information on nonsampling error including the possible impact on CPS data when known, refer to Statistical Policy Working Paper 3, *An Error Profile: Employment as Measured by the Current Population Survey*, Office of Federal Statistical Policy and Standards, U.S. Department of Commerce, 1978 and Technical Paper 40, *The Current Population Survey: Design and Methodology*, Bureau of the Census, U.S. Department of Commerce.

Sampling Variability. Sampling variability is variation that occurred by chance because a sample was surveyed rather than the entire population. Standard errors are primarily measures of sampling variability, although they may include some nonsampling error. Much more detailed information on standard errors and their use is available in Bureau of the Census publications on related topics.

Comparability of Data. Data obtained from the CPS and other sources are not entirely comparable. This results from differences in interviewer training and experience and in differing survey processes. This is an example of nonsampling variability not reflected in the standard errors. Use caution when comparing results from different sources.

Caution should also be used when comparing estimates in this chart book which reflect 1980 census–based population controls, with estimates for 1980 and earlier years, which reflect 1970 census–based population controls. This change in population controls had relatively little impact on summary measures such as means, medians, and percentage distributions, but did have a significant impact on levels. For example, use of 1980 based population controls results in about a 2-percent increase in the civilian noninstitutional population and in the number of families and households. Thus, estimates of levels for data collected in 1981 and later years will differ from those for earlier years by more than what could be attributed to actual changes in the population. These differences could be disproportionately greater for certain subpopulation groups than for the total population.

Since no independent population control totals for persons of Hispanic origin were used before 1985, compare Hispanic estimates over time cautiously.

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